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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 STATE 048551

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: CASC ASEC NP

SUBJECT: TRAVEL WARNING - NEPAL

**¶1.** This Travel Warning updates safety and security information for travelers to Nepal. The Department of State remains concerned about the security situation in Nepal and urges American citizens to obtain updated security information before they travel and to be prepared to change their plans on short notice. This supersedes the Travel Warning for Nepal issued on February 25, 2008.

**¶2.** Nepal continues to experience sporadic incidents of terrorism and politically-motivated violence in major urban areas. In the run-up to Constituent Assembly elections on April 10, bombings occurred in various locations around the country, including four bombings in the capital, Kathmandu, on April 4, in which no one was injured. In September 2007, near-simultaneous blasts at three locations in Kathmandu killed three persons and injured scores of commuters and bystanders, many of them seriously. Nepalese police believe that the Improvised Explosive Devices were planted intentionally where people congregate, and in a moving microbus carrying passengers. American citizens are reminded to remain on high alert, avoid public transportation (including travel by microbus), and be cautious of unattended baggage in public places, including airports and bus depots.

**¶3.** In November 2006, a Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was signed by the Government and the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), a U.S. designated terrorist organization. Following that agreement, the former insurgents joined the interim parliament and, subsequently, the interim government. However, since the signing of the CPA, the Maoists have continued to engage in violence, extortion, and abductions. The Young Communist League, a Maoist subgroup, continues to extort and abuse people, including threatening Kathmandu-based personnel of a U.S. Non-Governmental Organization.

¶ 14. Various armed groups emerged in 2007, primarily in the Terai region along the southern border with India, and insurgent violence has affected trade and travel in that area. Ethnic tensions in the Terai region have spawned violent clashes with police, strikes, demonstrations, and closures of the border with India. The U.S. Embassy strongly recommends against non-essential travel to this region.

¶ 15. While widespread protests have abated, the potential for demonstrations and disruptions remains high. During demonstrations, protestors have used violence, including burning vehicles, throwing rocks and burning tires to block traffic. Given the nature, intensity and unpredictability of disturbances, American citizens are urged to exercise special caution during times when demonstrations are announced, avoid areas where demonstrations are occurring or crowds are forming, avoid road travel, and maintain a low profile. Curfews can be announced with little or no advance notice, and American citizens are urged to consult media sources and the Embassy's website, <http://nepal.usembassy.gov> for current security information.

¶ 16. Crime in the Kathmandu Valley, including violent crime and harassment of women, has continued to increase since April 2006, and police are unwilling or unable to arrest criminals who claim Maoist affiliation. Travel via road in areas outside of the Kathmandu Valley is hazardous due to erratic drivers and frequent road accidents, and should be avoided. Police have reported a number of robberies by armed gangs; in some cases victims were attacked and injured. The U.S. Embassy reports an increase in crime in some popular tourist areas. Visitors to Nepal should

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practice good personal security when moving about, especially at night, and avoid walking alone after dark and carrying large sums of cash or wearing expensive jewelry. In several reported incidents tourists have had their belongings stolen from their rooms while they were asleep. Solo trekkers have been robbed by small groups of young men, even on some popular trails.

¶ 17. Almost all U.S. official travel outside the Kathmandu Valley, including by air, requires specific clearance by the U.S. Embassy's Regional Security Officer. As a result, emergency assistance to U.S. citizens may be limited. Active duty U.S. military and Department of Defense contractors must obtain a country clearance for official and unofficial travel to Nepal.

¶ 18. Although the Government of Nepal no longer considers the Maoists to be terrorists, the U.S. Government's designation of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) as a "Specially Designated Global Terrorist" organization under Executive Order 13224 and its inclusion on the "Terrorist Exclusion List" pursuant to the Immigration and Nationality Act remain in effect. These two designations make Maoists excludable from entry into the United States and bar U.S. citizens from transactions such as contribution of funds, goods, or services to, or for the benefit of, the Maoists.

¶ 19. For additional information, please refer to "A Safe Trip Abroad" found at <http://travel.state.gov>. Americans living or traveling in Nepal are encouraged to register with the U.S. Embassy through the State Department's travel registration website. The Consular Section of the U.S. Embassy in Kathmandu is located at Maharajgunj. The telephone number is 977-1-4007200, 4007201. The number for after-hours emergencies is 977-1-4007266, 4007269. The fax number is 977-1-4007281. The Consulate's e-mail address is [consktm@state.gov](mailto:consktm@state.gov) and its Internet web page is <http://nepal.usembassy.gov>. U.S. citizens should also consult the Department of State's latest Travel Warning

for Nepal, Country Specific Information for Nepal and the Worldwide Caution, available at <http://travel.state.gov>. Up-to-date information on security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the United States and Canada or, for callers outside the United States and Canada, a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).

**¶10. Minimize considered.**

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